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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
FRIDAY, APRIL 6, 2007

In Today's Papers

Debate over Presidential Elections Continues in Turkey
All papers report that Thursday Turkish university rectors released a declaration saying Turkey needed an "impartial, modern and secular president with a clean past." Rectors' spokesman, Higher Education Board (YOK) president Professor Erdogan Tezic stressed that at least two-thirds of lawmakers should participate in the first two rounds of the presidential elections in the parliament, warning that otherwise the election will not be valid. AKP deputy group chief Salih Kapusuz shrugged of the declaration, accusing YOK of acting "like an ally of CHP."

Prime Minister Erdogan met with the representatives of labor union Turk-Is who reportedly reminded him of constitutional principles, advising the PM to seek compromise in naming the new president. Erdogan stressed three presidents had been chosen under the existing constitution so far, and it was unfair to ask the AKP to compromise.

Erdogan kicked off rounds of talks on Thursday evening with his ruling AK Party lawmakers in an effort to learn their opinions with regard to the presidency.

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul, in Berlin on a state visit, told Financial Times Deutschland that Erdogan was a "suitable" candidate for the presidency.

DTP Investigations Continue; Erdogan Cleared of Ocalan Remarks
Milliyet, Sabah, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Zaman and others report the pro-Kurdish party DTP's Diyarbakir provincial head Hilmi Aydogdu, arrested in March for saying a military attack on Kirkuk was no different than one made on Diyarbakir, has been released. Aydogdu's trial procedure continues. In Ankara, four DTP leaders including the party provincial chief, Salih Karaaslan, have been arrested for "making PKK propaganda" in press conferences in February and March.

Meanwhile, the Interior Ministry has launched three separate

investigations against the Mayor of mainly Kurdish Diyarbakir, Osman Baydemir, for sending out invitations, greeting cards, and posters in the Kurdish language.

On the other hand, Ankara prosecutor decided not to file a case against Prime Minister Erdogan for allegations that he praised the imprisoned PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan by calling him "Mr." in a radio interview Erdogan gave in Australia in 2000. The prosecutor ruled there was "no element of criminal offence" in the interview and also it "exceeded the statute of limitations."

Nokta Weekly Investigated for "Coup" Stories

Milliyet, Sabah, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Zaman and others report Nokta, a controversial weekly political magazine, complained that a legal investigation was launched against the publication after it claimed that Turkey has escaped from two military coups in 2004, thanks to then chief of Turkish General Staff (TGS) chief Hilmie Ozkok's prevention. The weekly had published the alleged diaries of former Naval Forces Commander General Ozden Ornek which included plans for military takeover against the ruling AKP government. Nokta said prosecutors launched a probe not after a call by Prime Minister Erdogan but after former commander Ornek petitioned the prosecutor's office for legal action. Radikal and Zaman criticize that the weekly was investigated but not the allegation of military takeover plans.

Iraq's Neighbors Meeting Put Off to May

Milliyet, Cumhuriyet and Zaman report Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari said an expanded Iraq's neighbors' meeting would be held "outside Iraq, and in the first week in May." Zaman says Ankara

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wants the talks held in Istanbul with the participation of G-8 members as well as the permanent members of UN Security Council, but will not object to Cairo as a new venue outside Baghdad. Cumhuriyet says Ankara had asked for participation of President Talabani or Prime Minister al-Maliki in the prospective Istanbul meeting. The Iraqi PM, however, has objected to Istanbul, and wants the meeting to be held at foreign ministerial or a lower level, says the paper.

Editorial Commentary on Pelosi Visit to Syria, Turkey-US Ties
Hasan Mesut Hazar writes from Washington in the conservative-nationalist Turkiye: "Nancy Pelosi's visit to Syria is a very interesting development. Not because the visit upset President Bush immensely but, also, as an open message to the world that US foreign policies no longer have the approval of the American people. Pelosi's visit to Syria is an open message from the US Congress that there is a different America than Bush's. All the surveys in the US shows that 84 percent of Americans are deeply concerned about the Bush Administration's foreign policies and 70 percent of them are against the war in Iraq. Pelosi's visit to Syria has another important aspect from the angle of Turkey -- in the past the American hawks criticized PM Erdogan harshly for his visit to Syria, accusing Turkey of starting a dialog with terrorism supporters Damascus and Tehran. I hope, the real face of the US which defends justice, peace and human values will always be in the front, and adventurers, hawks and cruel people will not be allowed to direct the country down the wrong path. Only then, will we have some hope for more peaceful world."

Kamuran Ozbir comments in the nationalist Ortadogu: "Because of its strategic location Turkey was always very important for the US -- until the last few years. US-Turkey relations were damaged after Turkey refused to allow US troops to enter Iraq through Turkey. And, then the US arrested eleven Turkish military officers in Northern Iraq. Turkey considered this issue a matter of honor. Turkey always needs the US's partnership, and Turkey is very important for the US. In short, both countries are aware of each other's importance and have been taking important steps lately to improve bilateral relations again. However, it is noticed that the US is in a deep relationship with one other ally, the Kurds. Nevertheless, Washington will realize soon that, as an important NATO ally and a supporter of the western world, no other country can

take Turkey's place."

TV Highlights
NTV (6 a.m.)

Domestic News

- The European Court of Human Rights said Turkey had violated the right to free elections of three former MPs (Merve Kavakci, Mehmet Silay and Nazli Ilicak) of the Islamist Virtue Party (FP). The court ordered Turkey to pay a total of 12,000 Euro to the three politicians for legal costs and expenses. Turkey had banned the FP in 2001 on the grounds that it became center of anti-secular activities.

- Turkish Cyprus leader Mehmet Ali Talat said there are tensions between the military and the civilian administration in north Cyprus.

- Turkish gendarmerie found 59 illegal Pakistani immigrants hiding in the LPG tank of a truck in the eastern province of Van. They were trying to get across Turkey and into western Europe.

- Over the weekend, Prime Minister Erdogan will join a ceremony for the opening of the Black Sea coastal motorway.

International News

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- On Friday, Turkish troops under the command of General Kasim Erdem will assume the regional command of Kabul for 8 months.

- Palestinian Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh met with British Consul General Richard Makepeace to discuss the release of a kidnapped BBC reporter.

- Kosovo's parliament overwhelmingly endorsed a UN plan that proposes internationally supervised independence from Serbia.

- Ukraine's President Viktor Yushchenko warned those who fail to carry out his order to hold early parliamentary elections would face criminal charges.

WILSON